

# House of Representatives Passes HEROES Act

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The House of Representatives passed legislation last week that will provide relief from financial obligations related to Title IV federal student aid, and smooth re-entry into higher education for U.S. military reservists called to active duty.

The Higher Education Relief Opportunities for Students Act of 2003 (HEROES) extends current legislation set to expire at the end of the current fiscal year. It ensures support for reservists by allowing the U.S. Secretary of Education to excuse them from federal student loan obligations while on active duty. It also asks institutions to give appropriate assistance and flexibility to men and women in uniform as they transfer in and out of postsecondary education during a time of war.

On March 27, American Council on Education (ACE) President David Ward sent a letter to members of the House Education and the Workforce Committee and the 21st Century Competitiveness Subcommittee on behalf of 12 higher education associations in support of the HEROES Act. That letter was followed by a similar letter to the full House of Representatives on March 31.

The HEROES legislation, introduced by Rep. John Kline (R-MN), encourages institutions to provide a full refund of tuition and fees to student reservists for the period they were not able to complete because they were called to duty and makes it easier for these students to resume their education when they return from active duty. It also asks lenders to be as flexible as possible to ensure that service men and women are not unduly burdened with student loan repayments while on active duty.

“We enthusiastically support this legislation—it is the best possible kind of legislation because it rewards and encourages institutions to do what most are already trying to do: make it as financially easy as possible for service men and women when they are called up, and to help them resume their education at a later point in time,” said Ward. “Passage of this law will hopefully stave off any future attempts to direct institutions on how to best help their students in the military.”

To read the letters, see <http://www.acenet.edu/washington/letters/2003/03march/HEROES.cfm> and <http://www.acenet.edu/washington/letters/2003/04april/HEROES.2.cfm>.